

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Charge

Review existing barriers to academic achievement in Wisconsin and make recommendations to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to a great education, regardless of location, disability, language barriers, and economic situation.

Problem Statement

Student achievement is affected by many factors in a child's life, including what happens in the earliest stages of life before a child enters school, the child's school environment, the child's health, the child's home environment, and the child's community. As a consequence, barriers a child encounters in any of these environments can become an impediment to academic achievement.

The Governor's Executive Order directs the subcommittee to identify and address the barriers to academic achievement in Wisconsin. The Governor's charge follows the tenets addressed by the Wisconsin Supreme Court four years ago in its landmark Vincent v. Voight case. In that decision, the court stated that "...Wisconsin students have a fundamental right to an equal opportunity for a sound basic education...one that will equip students for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally." Further, the court noted that "An equal opportunity for a sound basic education...takes into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English language skills."

Following the charge and this direction from the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the subcommittee identified the most significant barriers to academic achievement as economic situation and limited English language skills. The subcommittee also strongly believes that the school climate, as influenced by racial, ethnic, and cultural biases among students and staff within schools, can also produce serious impediments to student achievement. Steps must be taken to address these barriers in order to ensure that each student in Wisconsin has an equal opportunity to a sound, basic education.

Literature/Research Review

School Climate Research Summary

A school's climate can have a dramatic affect on student performance, and may be a contributor to the achievement gap that exists between students of economic disadvantage and students of color and their peers. According to research performed by Dr. Sandra Dickerson, Professional Development Specialist in Milwaukee Public Schools, low teacher expectations and low grading standards are causes of the achievement gap. Dr. Dickerson's research further notes that African-American students cite such factors as a lack of challenging work, low expectations by teachers, and not enough support in school as contributors to the achievement gap.

Family and Community Support Research Summary

There is a growing school of thought that suggests that academic achievement is greatly affected by out-of-school time, and is perhaps shaped more by what happens outside of the school than what goes on in the classroom. Disengaged parents, low quality child care, a lack of activities during non-school hours, such as before and after-school programming and summer school, all contribute to lower student achievement.

According to a recent article by Karen Bogenschneider and Carol Johnson entitled "Family Involvement in Education: How Important Is It? What Can Legislators Do", parental involvement in student learning is particularly important for children in disadvantaged homes. However, Bogenschneider and Johnson noted that parental involvement improves student success, regardless of the parent's income level, education level and that parent's involvement in learning results in improved performance regardless of racial, ethnic, and economic background. Schools can be a strong partner in helping foster family involvement to promote student academic achievement.

Safe environments during non-school hours are also important for student achievement. According to a July 2003 report by the Harvard Family Research Study, programs like the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and other programs that provide services to children during non-school hours were linked to higher academic gains in school, more positive attitudes and higher expectations for school performance, and greater school attendance.

Research completed by Julie Frazier, Assistant Professor of Child Development and Family Studies at Purdue University, indicated that students achieving at lower levels lose ground over their summer vacations. This study, which followed kindergarten students through the end of first grade in both traditional and extended-year programs, indicated students in an extended-year school did better in math and reading by the beginning of first grade and maintained their advantage over their counterparts to the end of that year. ("Effects of Extended-Year Schooling on the Achievement of Low Socioeconomic Students in Elementary School", Julie Frazier, Purdue University, 1997).

Small Class Size Research Summary

- There have been over 100 studies of small class sizes in recent decades. In *The Enduring Effects of Small Classes* (Finn, Gerber, Achilles, Boyd-Zaharias, *Teachers College Record*, April 2001) the authors summarize four major conclusions from these studies "(1) 'Reduced class size can be expected to produce increased student academic achievement' (Glass and Smith, 1978, p.4), although the effects of even substantial reductions are small (Slavin, 1989). (2) 'The major benefits from reduced class size are obtained as the size is reduced below 20 pupils' (Glass and Smith, 1978, p.v.). (3) Small classes are most beneficial in reading and mathematics in the early primary grades (Robinson, 1990). (4) 'The research rather consistently finds that students who are economically disadvantaged or from some ethnic minorities perform better academically in smaller classes' (Robinson, 1990, p. 85)."

- In more recent studies small class sizes have been proven, through scientifically-based research, to improve student achievement. Both the STAR study in Tennessee - http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2826/information_show.htm?doc_id=71001 - and the SAGE evaluation in Wisconsin - http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/SAGE/annual_reports/2000-2001%20Evaluation/epru-0201-104-executive%20summary.pdf - came to this conclusion. In *The Future of Children* article on the Tennessee study Frederick Mosteller reported “the evidence is strong that smaller class size at the beginning of the school experience does improve the performance of children on cognitive tests. Observations from the Lasting Benefits Study confirm that the effect continues into later grades when children are returned to regular-sized classes. In addition, the implementation of the program for the economically poorest districts seems to be improving the performance of children in these districts by noticeable amounts.” In *The Enduring Effects of Small Classes* (Finn, Gerber, Achilles, Boyd-Zaharias, *Teachers College Record*, April 2001) the authors indicate that a reexamination of the STAR K-3 data substantiated “three conclusions. First, on average, students in small classes perform better than do students in regular classes or regular classes with teacher aides in each grade on all tests of academic performance.” “Second, both the year in which a student first enters a small class and the number of years they participate in a small class are important mediators of the benefits gained.” “Third, in general, we found few if any academic benefits associated with a full-time teacher aide.” The SAGE evaluation for 2000-01 by UWM found that “The SAGE achievement advantage persists. When scores are adjusted for pre-existing differences in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, attendance, and prior knowledge, a SAGE advantage from the beginning of first grade to the end of third grade is shown on all subtests.”
- Follow up studies of the children that had the benefit of small class sizes in Tennessee show that those children also demonstrated more positive long-term outcomes (fewer dropouts, more likely to take advanced coursework in high school, more likely to apply to attend college) than the control group - <http://www.heros-inc.org/star-press-release.pdf>. More positive outcomes were also related to the number of years the children were in the small classes (better outcomes occurred for the children that had more years in small classes). In *The Enduring Effects of Small Classes* the authors indicated that “In addition to immediate impact, attending small classes also had long-term benefits. In general, students who attended small classes in K-3 performed better academically on all subjects in grades 4, 6, and 8 than their peers who attended full-size classes.” “Carryover effects were consistently significant only for students who had attended small classes for three to four years.”
- Why do small class sizes help improve achievement? Bruce Biddle and David Berliner in an article published by EdWest and included in the February 2000 edition of *Educational Leadership* - http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/small_classes.pdf - suggest two possibilities. One relates to student teacher interaction – “One-to-one instruction allows teachers to learn more about individual students and their needs, thus helping students develop more useful habits and ideas about themselves and their abilities. In addition, teachers in small classes have higher morale, and this enables them to provide a more supportive environment for initial student learning.” A second theory relates to classroom

culture and environment, including reduced need for classroom management, reduction in the need for discipline and more opportunity for children to work together in small groups. “In brief, small groups can create supportive contexts in which learning is less competitive and students are encouraged to form supportive relationships with one another.” Both of these effects have also been reported by SAGE schools or documented in the SAGE evaluation reports.

- The STAR study in Tennessee was one of the rare instances where a true experiment with randomly assigned experimental and control groups was carried out in a real educational setting. Because most other studies have to be conducted in schools and classrooms where laboratory conditions cannot be duplicated, conclusions about the benefits of small class sizes will probably continue to be questioned. A large amount of research and analysis suggests that students in smaller classes do better academically than students in larger classes. Disagreement in the research community continues about whether the gains are worth the cost, and about whether similar gains could be achieved with cheaper alternatives.
- There is proof from Wisconsin and across the country that smaller classes can contribute to improved achievement in the short term and also to more positive long term outcomes. In Wisconsin we are also seeing many long-term SAGE schools show gains, sometimes substantial gains; on the state’s third grade reading test (WRCT). There is also documentation of improvement being produced by individual schools or local researchers and articulated in the testimony of parents and teachers (see links below).
 - *Making the Most of Opportunities* (the SAGE program at Webster Stanley in Oshkosh) - <http://www.socialstudies.esmartweb.com/HTMLSage/SAGEresearchsummary.htm>
 - *Staff Report: Executive Summary* – (report to School Board – Webster Stanley Elementary) – http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/sage/doc/model_report_2003_05_websterstaley.doc
 - *Class Size Reduction: A Facilitator of Educational Program Coherence-* <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-4/kiger.html>
 - SAGE Benefits and Consequences – 2001-02 Year-End Reports – http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/sage/doc/positive_benefits_%202001-02.rtf
 - WRCT-SAGE/non-SAGE Comparison - http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/oea/sage/xls/wrct_sage-nonsage_2002-03.xls

Links to Other Class Size Studies and Articles:

- UWM SAGE Evaluation Reports – 1997-2001 - [Education Policy Studies Laboratory: Student Achievement Guarantee in Education](#)
- Capitalizing on Small Class Size. ERIC Digest #136 - <http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed440430.html>
- Class Size Reduction in California. <http://www.classsize.org/techreport/index-01.htm>
- Using What We Know – NCREL Policy Brief - <http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/pdfs/weknow.pdf>
- *EdWeek* – 10/18/2000 - <http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=07research.h20>

- *EdWeek* – 10/25/2000- <http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=08molnar.h20>
- AFT Parent Page - http://www.aft.org/parentpage/class_size/index.html
- *The Class Size Debate* – Economic Policy Institute - <http://www.epinet.org/books/classsize Debate.pdf>

Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs Research Summary

- The number of English Language Learner (ELL) students that have been identified through an annual census in Wisconsin has increased by over 125% between 1993-94 and 2003-04. Further, school districts costs for the approximately 40 school districts required by state law to implement bilingual-bicultural education programs has increased by over 130% during this same period (Department of Public Instruction, 2004).
- There are studies and data that show achievement of children learning a second language. There are numerous national studies and also some data from Wisconsin to further support the conclusions of the national studies. Some of the key studies discussing the benefits of children learning a second language were conducted by the National Research Council (1997, 1998); General Accounting Office Report (2001); Thomas/Collier (2001) longitudinal study (12 years); Ramirez Report (Sponsored by US ED: 1992); Meta-analyses by Ann Willig (1985) and Jay Greene (1997); Data from Sheboygan Area School District on performance of formerly Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students; and Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).
- The key findings of studies such as those mentioned above are that effective support programs are long term, 5 years average per student. They also emphasize both language and academic achievement and use accelerated or enrichment strategies not remedial. Effective programs also use both the student's language (to the extent possible) and English. They also use a variety of methodologies and have a high degree of coordination with staff schoolwide. Two-way immersion programs are particularly effective but require certain preconditions for implementation.
- Data from the Sheboygan Area School District looked at students after an average of five years of program support. These students, now classified as "formerly LEP" outscored the district average on statewide standardized testing (the WKCE) in four out of five subject areas tested. Other Wisconsin school districts have had similar results. In 2004, DPI plans to analyze statewide data on the performance of formerly LEP students to increase our knowledge of these trends across Wisconsin.

Health and Nutrition Research Summary

Wisconsin has traditionally been near the bottom in state rankings related to student participation in school breakfast programs. In 2002-03, less than 24 percent of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch participated in school breakfast programs in Wisconsin, ranking it last among all U.S. states. In addition, while 18 states had over 90 percent or more of their schools with operating breakfast programs in 2002-03, Wisconsin's

participation rate was roughly half of that figure (School Breakfast Scorecard, Food Research and Action Center, November 2003).

While there are many reasons why children of all income levels have found it difficult to enjoy a healthy breakfast each day, its importance to low-income children is of particular importance. Research has shown that students who skip breakfast are less able to distinguish among similar images, show increased errors, and have slower memory recall. Studies have also shown that hungry children have lower math scores and an increased likelihood to repeat a grade, and that behavioral, emotional and academic problems are more prevalent among hungry children (School Breakfast Scorecard, Food Research and Action Center, November 2003).

In addition, children's overall health has a direct link to their academic success. Health-related absences can greatly impede learning and affect children's academic outcomes. Low-income children often face barriers to high quality health care and may be limited by access to health care services. Furthermore, urban children face particular challenges, as they are disproportionately affected by asthma, lead poisoning, diabetes, and other health factors that impede learning.

Recommendations

Student achievement is affected by what happens in a child's life before the school years, in school, at home, and in the community. As a consequence, barriers a child encounters in any of these environments becomes an impediment to academic achievement. In its deliberations the Academic Achievement Subcommittee has focused on barriers in and outside of school and has agreed on recommended programs to address these barriers.

In accordance with the Governor's charge, the subcommittee has found through its work that there are many barriers to academic achievement that Wisconsin students face. While the subcommittee does not dismiss the importance of barriers such as disability, the lack of early childhood preparation for school, and teacher quality, it notes those barriers are being addressed by other subcommittees of the greater task force. Through its work and review of research, the subcommittee concluded that the most significant barriers to academic achievement in need of immediate attention are economic situation and language.

As noted in its problem statement, the subcommittee strongly believes cultural and ethnic biases among students and staff within schools are too often a serious impediment to student achievement. In order to remove this barrier and thereby make such diversity a strength rather than a weakness, the subcommittee recommends schools and school districts, with state financial and programmatic support, provide more training and staff development programs for all individuals in schools so an environment conducive to higher achievement for all children is in place in every school building in the state. To the same end, the subcommittee recommends the recruitment of minority administrators, teachers and support staff be made a high priority for school districts, and that the university system make it a high priority to encourage minority students to pursue, and train them for, careers in education so as to increase the pool of qualified minority persons available to work in education.

While the subcommittee recognizes there is no “silver bullet” program to improve student achievement, it has concluded that the means for improving achievement are many and varied and are offered at all levels of government, local, state and federal. There are existing programs at all levels, some more effective than others, that are designed to address barriers to achievement. While local and federal programs are clearly acknowledged for their role in addressing achievement issues, the subcommittee recognizes its role is to identify what the state can better fulfill the Governor’s charge to “...ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to a great education...”.

The first tool identified by the subcommittee to address barriers to academic achievement was instilling and maintaining a strong, positive **school climate** in every school building. It was recognized that promoting the importance of tolerance and mutual respect among and between all students and staff was invaluable in having an environment where all students are provided with the opportunity to obtain a great education.

1. Both the state and local school districts should encourage all schools to promote the importance of a strong and vibrant school climate that provides staff development opportunities regarding tolerance and respect for all children.

Justification: State and local encouragement of staff development training related to tolerance and respect for all individuals within a school environment is just as critical in achieving the task force’s goals as providing additional state funding for any particular program.

Estimated Cost: None

2. Similar to its current model academic standards, the state should implement standards for students that stress the importance of a positive school climate that encourages tolerance and respect

Justification: The world is becoming an increasingly diverse environment and Wisconsin’s schools are no exception. In addition, it should be noted there are school environments that are not consistent with promoting a positive school climate for all students, such as those involving American Indian mascots. Further, current law [s.118.01 (c) 7. and 8.] states “Each school board shall provide an instructional program designed to give pupils...an appreciation and understanding of different value systems and cultures...and an appreciation and understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics.” There will continue to be a growing need for all Wisconsin students to be tolerant and respectful of one another, regardless of one’s background to assure the environment that all students are a part of is one that breaks down barriers to academic achievement, not one that maintains them.

Estimated Cost: None

In addition, providing “**wrap-around**” **programs and family and community support** was noted as a second tool the subcommittee believes is important towards addressing student achievement. As noted at the start of this section, the subcommittee believes that while the normal school day hours are undoubtedly of critical importance, that what a students does outside of school is also of significant importance when addressing achievement issues. It is within this category that the subcommittee makes the following recommendations:

3. Create a 10-school pilot program that is focused on districts and/or schools throughout the state that have a significant concentration of students living in poverty to develop an extended year program that is coordinated with other parent and community programs. Specifically, such a program would provide state and/or other funding for districts and/or schools that extend their school year beyond the current, normal 180 day academic year.

Justification: While research underscores the importance of continuous learning for all students, this is especially true for students living in poverty. Research has shown that extended time away from school results in the loss of significant knowledge that has been gained throughout the year. This loss of knowledge results in schools spending significant time reviewing information learned in the previous year. Under current law, there is no financial incentive for school districts to schedule more than 180 days of school each year as all students are treated equally provided they fulfill various hours of instruction requirements. Thus, a pilot program that would provide high poverty districts and/or schools that extend their school year is worthy of attention for the broader task force.

Estimated Cost: If it is assumed the average statewide cost per student is roughly \$10,500 for a 180 day school year (or \$60 per day), then providing funding for a single school with 500 students that provides 210 days of instruction would cost an additional \$900,000 (30 days X \$60 per day X 500 students).

4. Increase current revenue limit authority factor for summer school enrollment from 40% count of full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment to 50%.

Justification: Under the NCLB, all Wisconsin districts will be required to have their students reach certain proficiency levels during the next ten years. Currently, many school districts provide summer school programs for remediation purposes; however, due to revenue limit constraints and the fact that districts may only count 40% of a summer school pupil for membership purposes under revenue limits (pupils are counted fully for state aid purposes), some districts have reduced summer school programs (e.g. MPS in 2003). Given the growing challenges faced by all districts in at least maintaining their current summer school programs, consideration should be given to increase the revenue limit authority factor for summer school from 40% to a higher figure. Finally, this initiative may be helpful in encouraging the 10% of school

districts in the state that currently do not offer any summer school opportunities to their students with the incentive to establish a summer school program if they so choose.

Estimated Cost: The proposal would have no state fiscal impact; rather, it would provide school districts with roughly \$12-\$15 million in additional revenue limit authority once fully phased-in after three years if summer school enrollments remain constant.

5. Create a pilot school for homeless students and students living in poverty that provides a residential/academy environment.

Justification: Recognizing the importance of providing all children with a stable and secure environment, and noting again the importance of what happens outside of a typical school day is of great importance related to student achievement, a residential school type concept is an alternative the entire task force should consider.

Estimated Cost: Unknown, as it would be dependent upon many factors.

6. Create a pilot program that provides incentives for high poverty districts and/or schools in both rural and urban areas to implement before and after school programs that meet the following criteria: (1) the programs are coordinated with parent and community programs; (2) the programs coordinate other services (e.g. transportation, child care, translation services) to promote greater parental involvement; (3) the programs encourage the creation of parent resource libraries/community campaigns that underscore the importance of helping children learn at home; (4) the programs increase parent volunteer opportunities in school; (5) the programs are coordinated with community health programs; and (6) the programs are coordinated with other related programs such as those required by SAGE.

Justification: There are currently no targeted state-funded programs that provide specific assistance for districts and/or schools to implement extended-day programs beyond that required through schools participating in SAGE. Evidence has shown that those hours immediately after the normal school day is over are critical to providing students with opportunities to participate in such programs, which are critical to achievement.

Estimated Cost: Unknown, as it would be dependent upon many different factors, including the number of eligible schools desired to be funded.

Throughout its work, the subcommittee reviewed existing state programs to determine their effectiveness as tools to help overcome the aforementioned barriers. The third tool that was identified to address barriers was **reduced class sizes**. It was recognized that the state Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program was helping to address barriers to achievement; however, the program does not go far enough in its current form. It

should also be noted that in the Vincent v. Voight State Supreme Court case, the court articulated a new standard so that “an equal opportunity for a sound basic education acknowledges those students and districts are not fungible and takes into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students, *economically disadvantaged students* (emphasis added), and students with limited English language skills.” It is with this background that the subcommittee makes the following recommendations related to the current SAGE program:

7. Increase the current \$2,000 payment per each eligible student to \$2,500, beginning in the 2005-06 school year. Index future SAGE payments per pupil annually thereafter to reflect increased school districts costs related to implementing SAGE program.

Justification: Since the SAGE program’s creation in 1996-97, state funding for SAGE on a per student basis has remained flat at \$2,000 per pupil. At the same time, total school district costs have increased by roughly 40%.

Estimated Cost: An additional \$24 million in state funding.

8. Provide additional funding on the same per student basis to existing SAGE schools that have at least 70% of low-income students that seek to increase the program (and its current requirements related to class size, extended hours, high expectations curriculum and professional development and staff evaluation practices) by one additional grade level each year up until the 8th grade.

Justification: While the SAGE program has assisted in addressing class size reduction issues in the early grades, it is recognized that similar attention is necessary at the middle school grades as well to continue to address achievement gap issues that grow for many students as they become older. This recommendation is not in the form of a mandate, rather, it is recommended that it be permissive for districts/schools interested in advancing SAGE principles to higher grade levels.

Estimated Cost: Current data indicate there are approximately 80-90 current SAGE schools that have at least 70% low-income students. In addition, there are roughly 4,000 SAGE eligible students in these schools collectively at each grade. Therefore, if it is assumed that all eligible schools chose to extend SAGE to higher grades, the maximum additional state fiscal impact at the current reimbursement level of \$2,000 per student would be as follows: \$8 million in the first year (4th grade), \$16 million in the second year (5th grade), \$24 million in the third year (6th grade), \$32 million in the fourth year (7th grade), and \$40 million in the fifth year (8th grade).

9. Permit additional districts/schools to enter into new SAGE contracts with the Department of Public Instruction to begin participation in the program and provide additional state funding on a similar per student basis.

Justification: The subcommittee recognizes that current state law does not permit DPI to enter into new contracts with schools interested in participating in the SAGE program. The subcommittee realizes there is interest from additional schools throughout the state in having the opportunity to enter into a contract with DPI to bring the benefits of reduced class sizes to their districts/schools as well.

Estimated Cost: Unknown, as it would be dependent among many factors, including the number of new schools desired to be included, the per student amount, and the number of new eligible students.

10. Seek additional accountability at the local level from currently participating SAGE schools.

Justification: The subcommittee recognizes the existing state requirements related to SAGE; however, it feels additional accountability at the local level would improve the effectiveness of the program. Such measures could include an annual local accountability plan for each SAGE school and a presentation to a local SAGE advisory panel for review.

Estimated Cost: None

The fourth tool identified by the subcommittee was **providing adequate state funding for English Language Learner (ELL) students**. As discussed above in the report's literature review, there are strong correlations between students who learn a second language and academic achievement. Again, it is noted that in the Vincent v. Voight State Supreme Court case, the court articulated a new standard so that "an equal opportunity for a sound basic education acknowledges those students and districts are not fungible and takes into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students, economically disadvantaged students, and *students with limited English language skills* (emphasis added)." Wisconsin has a strong tradition of supporting English Language Learners, but much more can be done to ensure that we are providing the support necessary to ensure high academic achievement among this student population. With regard to addressing this issue the subcommittee recommends the following:

11. Increasing the state bilingual-bicultural categorical aid program to 50% reimbursement of eligible school district costs during the 2005-07 biennium.

Justification: The state bilingual-bicultural aid program is deeply underfunded, last receiving a funding increase in the late 1980's. It is expected that state funding will reimburse approximately 12-13% of eligible school districts costs in 2004-05. It is recommended there be at least an equal commitment on behalf of both the state and school districts to retain a local commitment to such programs. Maintaining the same level of categorical aid funding, while bilingual-bicultural education costs continue to rise, effectively shifts the funding source for such cost to general school aid and property taxes. Further, the number of ELL students continues to rapidly increase,

which is requiring more school districts to provide bilingual-bicultural programs for ELL students under state law.

In addition, since ELL students are required under the federal NCLB act to take required assessments in English within three years, the state should provide adequate funding to assist school districts in providing the necessary instruction and services so they perform as well as possible on these exams.

Estimated Cost: An additional \$28-30 million in state funding in the first year of implementation to meet 50% target and an additional \$2-5 million annually thereafter to maintain 50% reimbursement commitment.

12. Providing funding on a per student basis for school districts that do not qualify for bilingual-bicultural categorical aid because they do not enroll a statutorily-set minimum of ELL students under current law. Require that districts receiving these funds use them for bilingual-bicultural education.

Justification: Current state law establishes ELL student thresholds that trigger required services and programs to be provided by school districts. Districts with ELL enrollments below these thresholds are not required to establish bilingual-bicultural programs; however, it is recognized that many non-qualifying districts provide such instruction and services to ELL students and receive no state aid. It is estimated that approximately 30% of ELL students in the state reside in districts that are not eligible to receive state aid.

Estimated Cost: To provide an equivalent level of reimbursement as recommendation #10 on a per student basis to all districts with ELL students, funding of roughly approximately \$1,600 per ELL student would be necessary, regardless of the student's location. This recommendation would increase state costs by an estimated \$20-22 million and an additional \$2-3 million annually to maintain 50% reimbursement commitment to currently ineligible districts educating ELL students.

The final tool highlighted by the subcommittee was providing adequate **opportunities for good health and nutrition**. It is widely accepted that adequate nutrition is of the utmost importance for the development of the mind and body. Further evidence has shown that students with empty stomachs will have a difficult time concentrating on their studies. Finally, overall student health is a critical component of student success. Students must be physically and emotionally healthy in order to perform at their highest potential in school, and need healthy environments in which to learn and grow.

With this background knowledge the subcommittee makes the following recommendations related to the issue of health and nutrition:

13. Increase current \$0.10 reimbursement for each breakfast served to school districts and private schools offering school breakfast programs to \$0.15.

Justification: The subcommittee recognizes that the current amount of reimbursement for each breakfast served is insufficient to cover the costs of the breakfast. In order to encourage effective breakfast programs this amount should be increased to provide: (1) a higher level of reimbursement for school districts and private schools with breakfast programs; and (2) an incentive to districts without the program to provide breakfasts for their students.

Estimated Cost: An additional \$400,000-600,000 in state funding.

14. Create a pilot program for school districts to initiate school breakfast programs.

Justification: Studies have found that poor children that are given a free breakfast at school gained three percentile points on standardized test scores and had improved attendance, compared to children who were eligible but did not participate. The subcommittee realizes that encouraging more schools to start school breakfast programs would be beneficial to academic achievement. Further, the state formerly provided \$150,000 GPR annually from 1994-95 through 1999-00 to encourage districts to begin breakfast programs through start-up grants.

Estimated Cost: \$150,000 to provide same funding level of former state program.

15. Recognize the strong correlation between academic achievement and student health and the role school nurses and other health-related staff play in providing quality services to all students.

Justification: A student's health and ability to receive quality health care is critical to academic achievement. There were speakers at the task force's public hearing who noted the school nurse to student ratio was as high as 1:8,500 in MPS, while the recommended registered nurse to student ratio is 1:750.

Estimated Cost: None

APPENDIX

Subcommittee Meetings Summary

The Academic Achievement Subcommittee met on six different occasions:

December 11, 2003 (Milwaukee Area Technical College, Madison)

January 16, 2004 (Department of Public Instruction, Madison)

January 28, 2004 (State Capitol, Madison)

February 13, 2004 (Department of Public Instruction, Madison)

February 27, 2004 (State Capitol, Madison)

March 12, 2004 (Department of Public Instruction, Madison)

First Meeting-December 11, 2003 (11:30 am-1:30 pm)

Subcommittee Members Present: David Hase-Chair; Pam Johnson; Jeffrey Smith; and Rita Tenorio.

Staff: Margaret Planner-DPI; Brian Pahnke-DPI

As a primarily organizational meeting, Mr. Hase reviewed the Governor's charge related to the subcommittee, including the need to review the barriers to academic achievement identified in the Governor's Executive Order #22 (4)(e). Mr. Hase noted it would be the subcommittee's goal to eventually make recommendations back to the whole Task Force that may or may not be fiscal in nature.

Other task force members discussed the importance of identifying current "best practices" in schools today and desired further information from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) on what state and federal funds currently exist to address barriers in the Governor's charge related to location, disability, language barriers, and economic status. Further discussion determined this subcommittee would not focus its attention on funding or issues related to disability as a barrier as a separate subcommittee was addressing that issue. DPI staff indicated they would prepare background information on the aforementioned topics for the subcommittee's next meeting on January 16, 2004.

Second Meeting-January 16, 2004 (10:00 am – 2:00 pm)

Subcommittee Members Present: David Hase-Chair; Lois Glover, Andrew Gokee, Pam Johnson; Jeffrey Smith; Rita Tenorio and Michael Spector (Task Force Chair)

Staff: Margaret Planner-DPI; Brian Pahnke-DPI; James Wall-DPI

Mr. Hase made some introductory remarks regarding the four specific barriers (location, disability, language barriers, and economic situation) to academic achievement identified in the Governor's charge to the task force. There was additional discussion by other task force members that there is no "silver bullet" mechanism that would address all barriers to achievement. Subcommittee members noted they could recommend starting new programs, but first wanted to review existing state and federal programs and see if they were cost effective. While members indicated they would not focus their attention on early childhood or special education issues since there were separate subcommittees addressing those issues, they would reference them in their report.

Location as a barrier

The subcommittee first studied location as a barrier, focusing its discussion on urban vs. rural districts. Margaret Planner from the DPI discussed information related to student achievement in rural and urban areas and answered questions. Other discussion points included an interest in any data that might indicate at what grade level the achievement gap starts growing. While there was significant discussion over location as a barrier, the subcommittee noted that while location may be an indirect factor or barrier to achievement, the data supporting that assumption were not that clear.

With regard to funding, Brian Pahnke from the DPI noted there was only one state-funded appropriation directed at a rural school district that met certain criteria related to its enrollment, its geographic size and its percentage of untaxable property within the district. Subcommittee members discussed testimony they heard at their Wausau hearing in November where suggestions were made by some officials to provide an additional "weight" to students from rural and small districts given that such districts often are not able to offer the same opportunities as urban districts.

Further discussion ensued regarding distance learning opportunities for rural districts and the role technology plays in providing opportunities to students residing in small, rural districts. There was also some interest from members regarding transportation issues in rural and small districts, particularly related to the increasing costs of transportation. It was noted state transportation aid had not been increased in many years and that consideration should be given to recommending either additional state aid or allowing revenue limit exemptions for transportation-related costs.

Language as a barrier

The subcommittee then reviewed language as a barrier to academic achievement. It was mentioned that under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act students must take standardized tests in English after three years. Further discussion included the recognition of

the philosophical and political debates seen nationally over English as this nation's primary language and whether students should only be taught in English.

Brian Pahnke presented information on the state-funded Bilingual-Bicultural aid program, noting that state funding for this program had not been increased since 1990-91 and that state categorical monies only funded roughly 13-14% of actual program costs for eligible districts in 2003-04. It was also noted there were roughly 31,200 eligible English Language Learner (ELL) students in 2001-02 in Wisconsin, but that only 21,600 resided in school districts eligible to receive funding. The subcommittee desired additional information from DPI staff on bilingual-bicultural funding at their next meeting, including a per pupil cost figure for educating an ELL student.

Jim Wall from the DPI reviewed available federal funds targeted at students for whom English was not their first language and noted the federal government provided Wisconsin with \$4.2 million in Title III funding and \$619,000 in 2003-04 for Migrant Education, which is a competitive program. Mr. Wall also answered a number of questions related to these two programs.

Some members noted they felt student achievement increases with the learning of a second language and wondered whether all students should have the opportunity to learn a second language at an early age. The subcommittee acknowledged the diversity of languages spoken in classrooms in Wisconsin as it was noted that some schools and/or districts have as many as 30 different native languages spoken by their students.

There was a general consensus that additional state and federal funding was desirable to address the needs of ELL students and that the number of ELL students would likely continue to increase. The subcommittee also noted that local control was necessary to allow local districts to determine the types of programs and/or teaching strategies that are being used to educate ELL students as there was not a "one size fits all" solution. Finally, the subcommittee pondered whether it should recommend foreign language education for all students in elementary school.

Economic situation as a barrier

Discussion then ensued regarding a student's economic situation as a barrier to achievement. Brian Pahnke reviewed the various state and federal categorical aid programs targeted to addressing the needs of economically disadvantaged students with a particular focus on the following state programs:

- Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program
- SAGE Debt Service Aid Program
- Preschool to Grade 5 (P-5) Program
- Head Start Supplement
- School Day Milk Program
- Open Enrollment Transportation Program
- Youth Options Transportation Program

There was lengthy discussion regarding the SAGE program in particular, with a focus on its statutory requirements, current funding levels, and participation. A variety of issues arose related to the SAGE program, including suggestions that the program should be expanded beyond third grade; that the Legislature should permit new schools to participate; that the current \$2,000 per pupil figure should be increased; and that some new funding should be provided for infrastructure. Rita Tenorio provided information on how the SAGE program was utilized in the Milwaukee Public Schools. Most members noted they felt the program was successful and that lower class sizes are important in addressing barriers to achievement. Margaret Planner from DPI answered numerous questions from members regarding the program, including the study of the program as well.

The subcommittee discussed other programs identified above, with some emphasis given to the Head Start Supplement program. Jeffrey Smith noted that Eau Claire receives funding for students it educates in a separate facility in that district. Some members noted the possibility of recommending a new program based on SAGE findings that would be a small, pilot program that would not be done on a statewide basis.

Jim Wall from DPI led the discussion of federal programs directed at districts with large concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. There was particular discussion around the Title I program, but attention was also given to competitive programs. It was noted that, under the NCLB, every district is required to have a homeless coordinator and that transportation must be provided so a student may continue to be enrolled in their same school.

Other Issues

Andrew Gokee also discussed the importance of achievement among American Indian students, noting that, on a national level, 50% of American Indian students drop out by the 8th grade and then only 50% of those students continuing on past eighth grade graduate from high school. Mr. Gokee noted the source of this information was from Dr. Dean Chavers, the director of Catching the Dream (an American Indian Scholarship Foundation).

The subcommittee also received information from Margaret Planner from DPI on the characteristics of successful schools and noted that strong parental partnerships are integral to improving student achievement. Members and other individuals in the audience referenced other issues they heard at the Milwaukee public hearing related to student health concerns and the lack of school nurses in some schools and districts. The role of after-school and recreation programs was also mentioned as being helpful to students. Finally, mobility concerns were also raised, and were noted to be of particular concern to the Milwaukee Public Schools. Further information was desired on each of these issues.

Third Meeting-January 28, 2004 (1:30 pm – 4:00 pm)

Subcommittee Members Present: David Hase-Chair; Lois Glover, Andrew Gokee, Pam Johnson; Jeffrey Smith; and Rita Tenorio

Staff: Margaret Planner-DPI; Brian Pahnke-DPI; Lynette Russell-DPI; Tim Boals-DPI
Anna Niles-DOA

The committee began its meeting by discussing the importance of continuing to review existing programs and their effectiveness, specifically addressing whether they should be continued and/or modified, and potentially proposing new programs tied to its charge.

The subcommittee reviewed its work related to the issue of location possibly being a barrier to academic achievement. Margaret Planner presented seven different charts to the subcommittee that compared student achievement in urban and rural areas and answered questions. Members noted it was difficult to summarize existing data and that they could not draw a specific conclusion with regard to this issue. It was further noted that it was more likely the issue of poverty, not location, was a barrier.

Subcommittee members then held an in-depth discussion of a student's economic situation as a barrier to achievement, noting the achievement gap is not just socio-economic, but also related to race/ethnicity. Other important factors related to achievement that were discussed included the need for quality teachers and principals; and parental involvement. It was also noted there is an achievement gap for minority children regardless of where they reside. Some members felt that more social services should be made available in lower socio-economic schools and it was suggested that schools provide programs and resources to parents and the community to better understand each others cultures. Caution was also urged over just believing that more money alone would solve a problem.

Further discussion included the following topics: the need for affordable health insurance; the importance of extended school day programs; providing counseling for children experiencing violence; making English as a Second Language programs available for parents/community members; providing racial sensitivity training; the important of increased security/safety issues; a review of a previous DPI handout on the characteristics of successful schools; and factors influencing success, such as having a collaborative staff, common goals, meaningful parental involvement and not being dependent on a "prescribed program".

The subcommittee further discussed the possibility of suggesting the creation of a pilot program or seed money to encourage schools to work towards improving student achievement. Lois Glover noted the importance of the SAGE program and providing further opportunities for students through class size reduction. Lynette Russell from DPI presented information on a minority student achievement network website members could review for additional information on this issue and answered questions from members on various issues.

The subcommittee then continued its discussions on language as a barrier to achievement and heard a presentation from Tim Boals, the administrator of the Bilingual-Bicultural Aid program at the DPI. Mr. Boals noted there are 84 different languages spoken in the

Wisconsin's public schools. He also explained the current statutory requirements for school districts to qualify for state Bilingual-Bicultural Aid. In particular, it was noted that districts need to have a concentration of students at certain grade levels in the same language to be eligible for state categorical aid. Mr. Boals stated that roughly 40-45 districts in the state are eligible for state aid annually; however, it was noted that many more districts educate ELL students each year and receive no state aid due to current requirements. Brian Pahnke of DPI noted that costs not reimbursed through the state categorical aid program are eligible "shared costs" that most districts are aided on through the state general equalization aid formula. There was some discussion on the implementation of current programs and dual language programs in the state, though it was noted that dual language programs are not feasible in every district. In response to an earlier question, Mr. Boals noted the current eligible statewide average aid per student through the Bilingual-Bicultural Aid program was \$2,853; however, current state funding provided a reimbursement level of \$375 per student.

Other discussion on language as a barrier noted it takes roughly five to seven years of support for a student to become academically proficient in another language and that there is no one model that is best for all districts, but rather what is important is that any model is implemented well and supported by the district. Other members noted that the strategies used to help ELL students are likely applicable to all students and that collaboration within a school and among its staff is necessary for any program to be successful. It was also suggested that learning a second language, especially at an early age is beneficial to all students and that perhaps foreign language education should be recommended for all elementary students.

Fourth Meeting-February 13, 2004 (10:00 am - 2:00 pm)

Subcommittee Members Present: David Hase-Chair; Lois Glover, Andrew Gokee, Pam Johnson; Jeffrey Smith; Rita Tenorio; and Michael Spector (Task Force Chair)

Staff: Margaret Planner-DPI; Brian Pahnke-DPI; Lynette Russell-DPI; James Wall-DPI
Anna Niles-DOA

The subcommittee began its meeting by hearing from Michael Spector on his various meetings with Milwaukee area officials and some of the concerns raised that may be addressed by this subcommittee. Lynette Russell from DPI shared handouts with members on work being done nationally regarding minority student achievement for their review and answered questions from subcommittee members on this project.

Rita Tenorio also provided members with materials regarding factors and programs to address student achievement. Ms. Tenorio summarized her materials by noting there is no "silver bullet" program to address achievement issues, rather that a good program is dependent upon quality teachers, teacher retention, early childhood programs, small classes; strong leadership; family involvement; sensitivity to cultural differences; the quality and rigor of the school's curriculum; and the connectivity of the curriculum to student's lives.

Tina Johnson, from the Institute for Wisconsin's Future and a Milwaukee Partnership Academy (MPA) representative, provided handouts and discussed the MPA and its current focus on literacy issues. Ms. Johnson noted that MPA would also address health needs/concerns and math in the future.

Margaret Planner from DPI presented information to the subcommittee that included research on various factors that are correlated with academic achievement. There was significant discussion around this handout, particularly regarding whether certain factors could be separated out from being directly part of the school environment. In response to questions related to federal incentive aid for low-performing schools, Ms. Planner noted that 28 of the 33 schools in Wisconsin with the greatest needs were in MPS and that DPI was granting each of these schools \$50,000 annually for three years according to federal guidelines under the NCLB. It was further stated that these funds must be used for school improvement initiatives as identified in individual school improvement plans.

The subcommittee then began discussion of its report back to the entire task force. It was noted its report should include recognition of the importance of early childhood education; the retention of quality teachers; and providing adequate funding for children with disabilities as each of these areas are also important to student achievement even though the subcommittee did not discuss these issues in depth since other subcommittees were addressing them. Some members also raised the issue of the need to preserve existing programs and/or reinstate former programs that have been repealed if they have proven to be effective.

Fifth Meeting-February 27, 2004 (9:00-10:30 am and 2:00-5:00 pm)

Subcommittee Members Present: David Hase-Chair; Lois Glover, Andrew Gokee, Jeffrey Smith; Rita Tenorio; and Michael Spector (Task Force Chair)

Staff: Margaret Planner-DPI; Brian Pahnke-DPI; Anna Niles-DOA

The subcommittee began its meeting by discussing the manners they wanted to recommend the barriers to academic achievement be addressed. Members identified these barriers as poverty, language, and ethnicity/culture. The discussion began with the idea of using class size reduction to increase academic achievement. Members stated that recommendations pertaining to the SAGE program should include increasing the \$2000 per student payment, expanding the grade levels through a voluntary pilot program to 8th grade, and allowing additional schools to enter the program. There was also discussion of instituting stronger accountability measures at the local level.

The subcommittee then moved to the issue of wrap-around programs that emphasize family and community involvement. The desire to increase parental involvement was central to this discussion, and arose in other issue areas that the subcommittee confronted. Members stated that wrap-around programs are a tool that would be useful to address the barriers to academic achievement faced by low-income students.

The area of health and nutrition was the next area taken up by the subcommittee. Members decided to recommend that the current \$0.10 reimbursement per each breakfast served given to schools should be increased to more adequately cover the school's costs. The subcommittee also favored providing a grant for districts to start-up breakfast programs. The concept of an 'easy breakfast' program was also discussed. This type of program would make it easier for schools to provide students with breakfast in an efficient manner through the use of a grab and go set up.

The subcommittee discussed other ideas as well, including proposing a pilot extended school year program for high-poverty districts/schools. There was also discussion over proposing a pilot program for a boarding school for homeless students along with the importance of having districts provide quality summer school programs.

It was further noted that the state was not addressing its responsibility for providing adequate funding for districts required to implement bilingual-bicultural programs under current law since the state is only sharing roughly 12-13% of the costs of such programs this year directly through the bilingual-bicultural categorical aid program. The group proposed increasing state reimbursement to approximately 50% and a desire for funding for all districts educating English Language Learners (ELL). Finally, additional accountability was recommended regarding the use of state funds, as it was noted that under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, that all ELL students must take state assessments in English within three years.

Sixth Meeting-March 12, 2004 (2:00 pm – 5:00 pm)

Subcommittee Members Present: Lois Glover, Andrew Gokee (via phone), Jeffrey Smith, Rita Tenorio, and Pam Johnson

Staff: Margaret Planner-DPI; Brian Pahnke; Anna Niles-DOA

Brian Pahnke, as acting-chair, began the meeting by reporting on the status of the other three subcommittee's reports. The members then moved into discussion of the draft final report. Formatting issues were discussed first. The members then moved to the issue of how to develop a problem statement and what it should say. They agreed the problem statement should cover the Governor's charge and also include a statement addressing cultural and ethnic barriers.

Discussion of the subcommittee's recommendations was the next area taken up, beginning with the issue of reduced class size. Members agreed to recommend increasing the SAGE per student payment to \$2,500 and have the funding indexed. The second recommendation was to expand SAGE to higher-grade levels in existing SAGE schools that have at least 70% low-income students, allowing them to extend SAGE by one grade level each year up to the 8th grade. The subcommittee then agreed to propose allowing new schools to enter the SAGE program and to seek additional accountability at the local level for current SAGE schools.

The members then moved to the recommendations addressing the language barrier. They agreed to recommend increasing the reimbursement of cost to 50% for the state bilingual-bicultural categorical aid program. It was noted that annual increases would be necessary to maintain the 50% commitment. The next recommendation discussed to address the language barrier was to provide funding on a per student basis for districts that do not qualify for categorical aid because they do not meet the minimum number of ELL students set in statute.

The area of “wrap-around” programs was next for the subcommittee. The members decided to recommend the creation of a 10-school-pilot program in schools with a significant level of poverty throughout the state. In addition, there was uniform agreement to increase the full-time equivalent (FTE) factor for revenue limit authority purposes for summer school from 40% (currently) to 50%. The members then recommended the creation of a pilot program for low-income students and those that are homeless. The program would consist of a residential/academy program to provide the students with a stable and secure environment. The final recommendation in this area is to develop a pilot program that provides incentive for schools to implement extended day programs meeting certain criteria. These criteria would target coordination of programs among the community, school and parents.

The subcommittee then moved to discussion of recommendations in the area of health and nutrition. They agreed to propose an increase of the current \$0.10 reimbursement for each breakfast served to \$0.15 per breakfast. Members also recommended reestablishing startup funds for school districts initiating breakfast programs. In a new recommendation, the subcommittee expressed a desire to make a statement regarding the importance of student health and health-related staff in academic achievement.

Some members stated that they would like to see some data regarding the trends in ELL in Wisconsin included in the research summary section. Members also stated that they felt there should be more discussion of the school climate issue. This discussion led to the development of two more recommendations. The first was to encourage the promotion of a healthy school climate through staff development opportunities that emphasize tolerance and respect toward all children. The next recommendation was to implement standards for students, similar to the state’s current model academic standards, which encourage tolerance and respect. Finally, the subcommittee grouped the recommendations in an order they felt would have the potential for the greatest impact on academic achievement.